



# Northern Great Lakes Synod Online Assembly Worship A Service of the Word

## WELCOME

**Bishop Katherine Finegan**

Welcome to this worship experience, modified from the planned Opening Worship for what would have been our Synod Assembly May 14-16, 2020. In our online video, multiple participants will lead the worship, many of them are the newest pastors to our synod. They will offer a word of introduction as to who they are and where they are serving. Other participants will be identified in the accompanying text.

Welcome to this, our first attempt at an online Synod wide worship experience. Since we cannot be together for our 2020 Synod Assembly, we can at least be together in this way. And welcome to anyone else who might be accessing this worship service from anywhere. We would have gathered under the theme, “Be Thou My Vision, 2020” and this service also has that theme as the focus as much of it would have been included in our opening worship.

A concerted effort was made to have participants from all over the Synod which covers the whole UP of Michigan and the 6 counties of Wisconsin along the southern border. Thanks to all who contributed, and to our newest pastors who would have been introduced at Synod assembly, but today, they and others will introduce themselves prior to their worship participation. Special thanks to Pastors Brahm Semmler Smith, Jay Welshonse, Terry Frankenstein, and Steve Solberg for contributing their technical know-how, and to Kyra Beck, a member of Bethany, Escanaba, for splicing it all together. Know that a bulletin and the sermon text for this worship service are available on our website, [nglsynod.org](http://nglsynod.org), and on our facebook page, the Northern Great Lakes Synod. Also the slide show towards the end of the worship will be available online as a separate video.

## GREETING

**Pastor Jim Duehring**

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

**And also with you.**

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

**Pastor Nicole Hanson-Lynn of Zion & Salem, Ironwood**

Let us pray.

God of new life,

You walk alongside us, you equip us for ministry, you beckon us forward.

Clear our eyes, focus our vision, help us to see where you would have us go, and give us the courage to get there so that we can be effective witnesses of your life and presence in the world. In Jesus’ name we pray, **Amen.**

FIRST READING—DANIEL 4:10-12     **Pastor Brahm Semmler-Smith of Gloria Dei, Hancock**

A Reading from Daniel

Upon my bed this is what I saw; there was a tree at the center of the earth, and its height was great. The tree grew great and strong, its top reached to heaven, and it was visible to the ends of the whole earth. Its foliage was beautiful its fruit abundant, and it provided food for all. The animals of the field found shade under it, the birds of the air nested in its branches, and from it all living beings were fed.

PSALM 119:105 -     **Pastor Jared Howard of Faith, Calumet**

As sung by Amy Grant

Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.  
When I feel afraid, and I think I've lost my way, still you're there right beside me.  
Nothing will I fear as long as you are near. Please be near me to the end.  
Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.

SECOND READING—REVELATION 21:1-6     **Pastor Brenda Greenwald of St. Stephen's, Stephenson and Gethsemane, Wallace.**

A Reading from Revelation

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them as their God; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes, Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away." And the one who was seated on the throne said, "See, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true." Then he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life.

GOSPEL—MARK 8:22-26     **Pastor Molly Eversoll of Messiah, Marquette**

The Holy Gospel according to Mark, the 8<sup>th</sup> chapter.  
Glory to you, O Lord.

They came to Bethsaida. Some people brought a blind man to him and begged him to touch him. He took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the village: and when he had put saliva on his eyes and laid his hands on him, he asked him, "Can you see anything?" And the man looked up and said, "I can see people, but they look like trees walking." Then Jesus laid his hands on his eyes again; and he looked intently and his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly. Then he sent him away to his home, saying, "Do not even go into the village."

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

Bishop Katherine Finegan

Be Thou My Vision Sermon by Bishop Katherine Finegan

Grace, mercy, and peace to you, from God our creator and our Lord and Savior Jesus the risen Christ.

It is a strange thing, to be in the midst of a global pandemic. This, of course, is not new to humanity. Nor is it new to the church who has survived countless plagues, influenzas, black death and more. But the thing is, this is new to us. Sure, to the historical church and to the eons of the world's experience, this is expected, a part of the pattern included in creation, barely a footnote when placed against the long line of historical record of various calamities and hardships that humanity has suffered. But to us, this generation, those who inhabit the world's stage in 2020, this is new. We have never been here before. The way forward feels unclear. Our vision is hazy. The next steps are unsure. And as we've seen things change, by the day, by the hour, sketching a plan for the future is all but impossible. We plan by best guesses while considering various scenarios of how restrictions and case spikes and economic hardships will play out. As I've said and written before, this year of 2020 is anything but. How ironic to celebrate a theme that lifts up 2020 vision when we can barely see to next week.

And truthfully, when we decided on this theme, it was true even then that the way forward was unclear. Even then, we knew we could not plan far ahead. The church was already changing, the long view of the road already had more than a few bends in it.

How even more true that is now. So how do we prepare for even one more step? How do we find a way forward? As congregations, as the Synod, as the Church together? It helps, I think, to read up on how the world and the Church has handled past plagues and pandemics. We can listen to the health experts and follow their advice. We can buy only the toilet paper we will need. These are all good things, but as people of faith, we also receive clarity when we focus on the one who can clear our eyes to see what is and gives us a vision not only of what we can become, but of how God is at work in the midst of all that feels unknown and precarious.

It is worth considering the role that vision and visions have in our scripture readings, that incidentally, were chosen last fall. In Daniel, King Nebuchadnezzar has a dream that Daniel is asked to interpret. The vision is of a tree that is described in great detail. Along with Daniel and the reader, we can imagine in our mind's eye what this beautiful and strong tree looks like with abundant fruit for all and branches visible to the ends of the earth. But what it means to us is less clear. And what it means to the dreamer, to Nebuchadnezzar, it takes the prophet Daniel to interpret the dream and translate its meaning. Seeing or visualizing, even in our own imagination, does not mean understanding the message that the dream conveys.

And from Revelation, another vision. But this vision is different. It pulls us in and resonates in the soul. I think of a bow drawn over a quivering cello string, or those tuning forks that echo with sound. This glimpse of the eternal speaks hope to our grief, sparking the imagination of a time when the deepest longing of our very souls is realized and our thirst for the comforting and palpable presence of a loving God is finally satiated. It speaks of a time when we are invited to drink our fill of God.

God's very own self will be with us and God will wipe every tear from our eyes, Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more.

This is the kind of vision that can pull us forward through the valley of the shadow of death. This is the kind of vision that can make current suffering and grief just a little more bearable because we know there will be an end to it, that current pain is only temporary, no matter how acute. In this vision, the perceiving of the meaning, that is, the understanding of it, is perhaps more clear than the actual seeing. And what I mean by that is, we feel the vision rather than see it. We long for it in the heart rather than behold it even in the eye of our imagination. For who can describe such a time when death is no more? Who can comprehend it, paint its color, give it dimensions, draw it on a canvas? No, this vision, is one we embrace through faith and we know it matters because it has an effect on us in this life. This vision of the future makes how we experience the present different...lightening the load, offering comfort, generating hope and strength and patience for the challenges of this life, even as it draws us forward into eternity.

And then we come to vision and visions in the gospel of Mark. It is a curious story, as if Jesus lacked effectiveness. In nitty gritty and spitty detail, Jesus tries once and then twice to apparently get it right and have the blind man not only seeing, but understanding what it is his newly healed eyes behold. But this telling of the healing of the blind man is not to inform us that Jesus had a learning curve in his healing skills, rather Mark is clueing in the reader and us, that there is more going on in his gospel than meets the eye. Throughout Mark's gospel, the very people who have a front row seat to the teachings and miracles of Jesus are blind to who Jesus is and the mission that Jesus is on. The disciples see Jesus in living color, every day. They observe his miracles and wonders. They watch him carefully. They follow him closely. And yet seeing is not perceiving or apprehending the purpose of Jesus. No matter how much the disciples witness, in Mark the meaning and mission of Jesus is more apparent, more clearly seen by the reader than it is by the disciples.

This story of healing foreshadows another story of healing in Mark when Jesus restores sight to the blind man, Bartimaeus, who even though he was blind, could still see exactly who Jesus was. "Jesus, Son of David have mercy on me," he calls out in trust that Jesus can and will heal him. And on the first try that apparently takes no effort at all, and no spit, Jesus heals his sight, but the vision of Bartimaeus was already clear. By the end of the story, Bartimaeus who already identified the Son of David, now beholds him with his eyes. And between these two healing stories in Mark's gospel, Jesus predicts his death three times. And the disciples still don't get it. But the reader does. And so do we.

We know the whole story. We do. So as people of faith, we don't just look back at how the Church survived or thrived in a pandemic. We look at how God in Christ Jesus has acted, what new life came, how the Spirit pushed and pulled and whispered and sang the people of God into a new way of being and doing. Hear the word of the Lord again, from Revelation, "And the one who was seated on the throne said, "See, I am making all things new." We are being made new, as individuals as we learn new ways of learning about and practicing our faith. As congregations as we are forced to utilize technology in ways that more readily connect our people to each other and to the study of scriptures. I continue to be impressed and blessed by the innovation of pastors and leaders in our synod. There is no shortage of online devotions, Bible studies, Coffee fellowship, worship, sermons, anyone with a computer or a smart phone has a smorgasbord of solid and engaging opportunities for study, learning, and spiritual refreshment. And anyone without reliable internet, I know pastors have made

the extra effort, sending out hard copy resources through snail mail to provide people with devotions, sermons, an encouraging word, a phone call prayer. ( I'm preaching to a camera. That's new!) But there is blessing in even that.

So...Be Thou My Vision 2020? Maybe. If vision is seeing, then I'm afraid the truth is, we are blind. But if vision is perceiving, apprehending, longing for and feeling the presence of God with the heart and mind and soul, then that is where the Spirit of Christ will call you, shape and prune you, comfort you in your grief, quiet the fears of your heart, and pull you through this dark pandemic valley, into new life. The road is neither easy, nor straight, but it is the road we are travelling together, not alone, but with each other, and with Jesus the Christ, the son of the living God who is the vision that pulls us forward into the future that will be. Thanks be to God. Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY "Be Thou My Vision" ELW #793

Pastor Rich Likeness of Ascension, Minocqua and Vicar Laurie Woods

1. Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart;  
Naught be all else to me, save that thou art;  
Thou my best thought both by day and by night,  
Waking or sleeping, thy presence my light.

Pastor Andrew Plocher of Messiah, Marquette and Pastor Bre Kinnunen of Lutheran Campus Ministry at Northern Michigan University.

2. Be thou my wisdom, and thou my true word;  
I ever with thee and thou with me, Lord.  
Thou my soul's shelter, and thou my high tow'r  
Raise thou me heav'nward, O Pow'r of my pow'r

Colin Walker, Nancy Stank, Nevaeh Deering of Porterfield Lutheran and Beaver American with Pastor Christina Forsythe

3. Riches I heed not, nor vain, empty praise,  
Thou mine inheritance, now and always;  
Thou and thou only, the first in my heart,  
Great God of heaven, my treasure thou art.

Lindsey Brindley of St. James, Rudyard with Pastor Matt Lamb

4. Light of my soul, after victory won,  
May I reach heaven's joys, O heaven's Sun!  
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,  
Still be my vision, O Ruler of all.

**Nicene Creed—** Spliced by Pastor Steve Solberg

Pastor Kayla Keilholtz of Grace, Pembine

With the whole Church, we confess our faith.

1st Article: Lucas Wickstrom

Trinity Lutheran and Bethel Lutheran Churches,  
Ishpeming, MI

We believe in one God,  
the Father, the Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all that is, seen and unseen.

2nd Article: Rev. Thomas Skrenes, Bishop Emeritus,  
Immanuel Lutheran Church, Negaunee, MI

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,  
the only Son of God,  
eternally begotten of the Father,  
God from God, Light from Light,  
true God from true God,  
begotten, not made,  
of one Being with the Father;  
through him all things were made.  
For us and for our salvation  
he came down from heaven,  
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary  
and became truly human.  
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;  
he suffered death and was buried.  
On the third day he rose again  
in accordance with the scriptures;  
he ascended into heaven  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.  
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,  
and his kingdom will have no end.

3rd Article: Melissa Salminen, Trinity Lutheran Church,  
Ishpeming, MI, and Student at Wartburg Theological  
Seminary, Dubuque, IA

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,  
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,  
who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified,  
who has spoken through the prophets.  
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church.  
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.  
We look for the resurrection of the dead,  
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION Spliced by Pastor Jay Welshonse  
Pastor Bethany Rutten-Kempees of Christ the King, Escanaba

Separated in our residences but united by God's promises of restoration, we pray for the church, the earth, the world, and all who are in need.

*A brief silence.*

Evan Rein, Member of Ascension, Minocqua

The heavens and the earth, and your church, are transforming. Wipe the tears from our eyes and give us patience in these days of becoming new. Be with us as we welcome change or resist it. Fear it or hope for it. As things that are familiar pass away, be with us. We pray especially for Pastor Rita Chirala and the people of Faith in the Sault, that the process of immigration will move swiftly and their ministry partnership may begin soon. Lord in your mercy. Hear our prayer.

Chuck Thomas, Member of First, Gladstone and Synod Council Vice-President

Give strength, healing, and hope to our brothers and sisters in the Eastern and Coastal Diocese of Tanzania. As people who have limited medical resources and great vulnerability, we commend them to your care. We ask for their safety and that we can be helpful to them as they meet the challenges ahead. Lord in your mercy, Hear our prayer

Diane Welshonse, Member of Northern Lights Parish

Come to all who suffer from the virus. Comfort the mourners, heal the sick, sustain medical workers. Empower those researchers who are seeking a vaccine. Dwell with all those who are isolated or afraid. Especially we pray for those we name here before you (*especially*):

Lord in your mercy, Hear our prayer.

Brian Kaven, Member of Bethany, Escanaba

God of light and vision, clear our eyes, give us courage to take the next step, quiet our anxiety. Where we feel weary, renew us. Where we feel hopeful, spur us on. Give us creative solutions even as we continue to hold fast to all that you are even as we become all you would have us be. Give wisdom to government and community leaders, congregation councils, pastors and bishops. We lift up especially Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton, Bishop Katherine Finegan, Assistant to the Bishop Pastor Jim Duehring, and all those who seek to guide a faithful response to our current challenges. Lord in your mercy, Hear our prayer.

With bold confidence in your presence, O holy and gracious God, we place all for whom we pray into your eternal and loving care; through Christ our saving and risen Lord.

**Amen.**

THE LORD'S PRAYER – spliced by Pastor Brahm Semmler Smith

Pastor Kay Richter: New Evangelical Lutheran Parish – Trinity Lutheran, Trout Creek; First Lutheran, Ewen; and Our Saviour Lutheran, Paynesville.

Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray...

Our Father who art in heaven. Hallowed be thy name

**Pastor Dennis Meyette: Immanuel, Escanaba**

Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven

**Craig Aho: Bethany, Escanaba**

Give us today our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.

**Brian Jarvis: Gloria Dei, Hancock**

And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

**Dave Mason: Immanuel, Escanaba**

For thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

SHARING OF THE PEACE OF THE RISEN CHRIST – by Zoom with all participants.

Peace be with you.

HYMN #715 – Christ be our Light. Slide show: The Year in Review

OFFERING – powerpoint slide Pastor Jim Duehring with Pastor Steve Solberg.



You are invited to give a gift to the Equipping the Saints Fund, formerly known as the Unrestricted Endowment Fund. The annual disbursement from this fund supports many different ministry efforts in our Northern Great Lakes Synod: Clergy Debt Relief, Lay School for Mission, Leadership Support, Walking Together events, Stewardship education, Faithful Innovations and Transformational Ministry work, Lutheran Campus Ministry at Bay College, and more.

Checks may be made out and sent to The Northern Great Lakes Synod, 1029 N. 3<sup>rd</sup> St. Suite A, Marquette, MI 49855. Or go to our website and scroll down to the “Donate” link using Paypal.

Thank you for your support of the work of Christ that we do together!

OFFERING PRAYER

**Pastor Rita Chirala called to serve Faith, Sault**

Let us pray,

God of new life, God of clear vision,

We thank you for the gift you give us in each other. We thank you for pastors and licensed lay ministers who have risen to new challenges. We thank you for the gift of your church who proclaims the hope of Christ and reminds us that we are not alone and this too shall pass. Just



as the church emerged from past plagues, pandemics, and trials, so shall we. Gather us together in the spirit and in the Spirit of the living Christ, until that time when we can gather together in person again, when we will lift our voices in song and prayer, giving thanks to you, the one who makes all things new, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

BLESSING

Pastor Tommy Richter of Zion, Manistique

Receive the benediction

The Almighty God, The Father, the Son +, and the Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever.  
Amen.

DISMISSAL

Pastor Sarah Semmler Smith, Chaplain at Finlandia University

Alleluia! Share the good news! Christ is risen!!  
Christ is risen indeed! Thanks be to God! Alleluia!

